

The Lutheran AMBASSADOR

May 20, 1997

Maintaining the Temple

Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit
who is in you, whom you have from God,
and that you are not your own.

For you have been bought with a price:
therefore glorify God in your body.

— I Corinthians 6:19-20



THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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AN ENCOURAGING WORD

Physically and spiritually fit

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship.

— Romans 12:1

It seems to come quite natural for me to only spiritualize the Bible. However, I believe there is a connection between the spiritual and the physical. Let's take the verse just quoted from Romans for example. If I am to present my body to God as a living sacrifice, am I not responsible to keep my body in the best physical condition possible? There are a number of things each of us can do to keep our bodies in good running condition.

First, we can exercise. Our grown children gave my wife Cheryl and me a treadmill. Apparently they were sending us a message. We're growing older but they want us to be older for a longer period of time. We try to be faithful in spending time on it, but that does not come easy. It takes discipline. There are days that go by when it just stands idly by, and so do we. I can physically tell the difference when I don't do it.

Second, we can help maintain our bodies by proper diets. We have a responsibility as children of God to feed our bodies properly with both nutritional food and in the right amount. Gluttony is a sin!

Third, our bodies need a certain amount of rest. God didn't expect us to work around the clock or always be on the go. We need time for relaxation, rest and sleep. When we realize that our bodies are a sacred dwelling place for God Almighty, it should be our great desire to honor Him with our bodies by keeping them rested and serene.

Our bodies require physical fitness because of the broken world we live in. Sometimes our bodies are attacked by outward forces beyond our control which slow down our physical capabilities. If that happens, we need to draw from God's grace and strength to endure.

We can also transfer this same concept of fitness into the spiritual realm. Unless we feed our souls a proper diet of spiritual food on a regular basis, we are not too likely to be as spiritually fit as we ought. It's beneficial for us to feed often on God's Word as it helps to nurture our spirits. But to only take in will make us spiritually obese. Like burning off calories, we need to give out of that which we have taken in.

When we put these physical and spiritual principles into regular practice, we will be fit to carry out God's plan, which is to extend His Kingdom in the hearts of all mankind.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

— Hebrews 12:12



— Pastor
David Skordahl
Dalton,
Minnesota

sound bites

"Why has the giving of money, for example, been unquestionably recognized as an element in

1 **Christian devotion and fasting so disputed? Certainly we have as much, if not more, evidence from the Bible for fasting as we have for giving. Perhaps in our affluent society fasting involves a far larger sacrifice than the giving of money."** — *Richard J. Foster*

"A recent medical study conducted at Columbia Children's Hospital in Ohio has confirmed that today's children are heavier and have significantly higher cholesterol and triglyceride levels than kids did even 15 years ago. One of the researchers, Dr. Hugh

Allens, said, 'Unless these trends change, 30 million of the 80 million children alive today in the United States will eventually die of heart disease.' ... Children are busy forming habits for a lifetime, so eating right and exercising every day will contribute to greater health in the future. And once your children are on the right path, you might want to begin working on yourself."

— *James Dobson*

4

3 **"Regular church attenders live longer. Religiousness markedly reduces the incidence of heart attack, arteriosclerosis, and high blood pressure."** — *David Larson*


"The concept of pain as a gift directly contradicts the common evangelical attitude of avoiding pain at all costs. We seem to reserve our shiniest merit badges for those who have been healed, with the frequent side-effect of causing unhealed ones to feel as though God has passed them by. The church needs to confront pain realistically and to affirm that a sick person is not unspiritual."

— *Philip Yancy*

5

6 **"Christianity makes sense in this world as well as in the next."**

— *John Locke (paraphrase)*



For the Christian why have the goal of caring for our bodies? After all, we live in just a temporal body. We'll be getting a glorified body in heaven. A purpose does exist, however, and it is seen in Psalm 139.

The creator God made us so intricately and fashioned and designed us with such loving care, how could we not handle this creation of His with anything but our best? We go to great lengths to preserve fine crystal, sculpture and other works of art. Are we not more valuable to the Creator and ourselves?

I am God's work of art. Each of my muscles and bones were specifically designed and fashioned to fit me. Everything about me was thoughtfully chosen and fitted into place. Each tiny detail — the size of my feet and the shape of my body was skillfully sculpted by the Master Creator. Life is God's precious gift. These verses speak of both the baby and the human body and gives us reason to care for this gift God has given me. As I get older, my body needs more care. The healthy food and exercise that was required when I was younger is still a necessity — even if it's just me at the table tonight.

First Corinthians 6 reminds us our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. It has been bought with a price. I am no longer mine, I am His. I am His dwelling place. For that reason it is important what I put into it and how I treat it. God has fashioned me and made me in His image and dwells within me, therefore, I want to take care of His creation.

— Karen Pederson
Zion Lutheran
Tioga, North Dakota

*I praise you
because I am
fearfully and
wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.
My frame was not hidden
from you when I was
made in the secret place.
When I was woven together
in the depths of the earth,
your eyes saw my
unformed body.
All the days ordained
for me were written in
your book before
one of them came to be.
— Psalm 139:14-16*

**I am
His**

Keeping a balance

When asked to write an article on caring for our bodies by avoiding extremes, I questioned if I was the person to do it. Yes I'm the one who takes a half a dozen chocolate chip cookies and sits down to eat them while watching TV. I live in Minnesota where in the winter it drops to -60 degrees without the wind chill! There are times we glorify God with our bodies by avoiding extremes such as watching what we eat, and then there are times we glorify God by going to extremes to do what He calls us to do — such as accepting a call to serve Him in Minnesota.

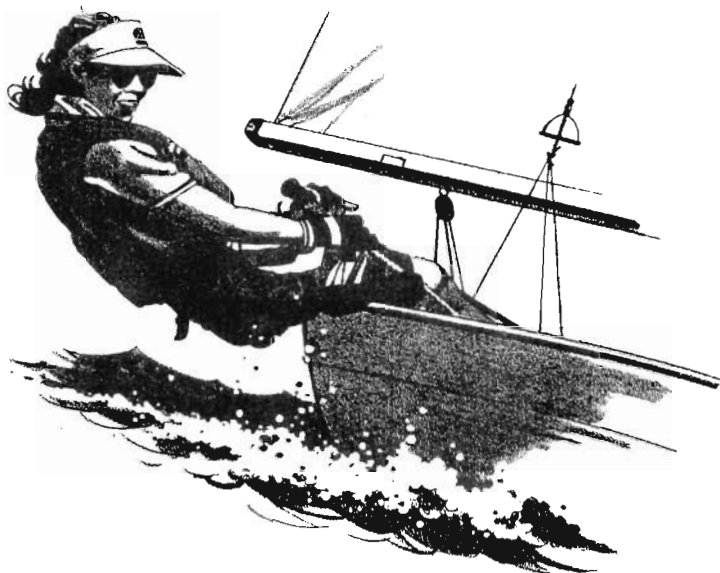
What is our motivation to glorify God with our bodies? First Corinthians 6:20 gives us the reason: "You were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body." The reason we avoid extremes in order to honor God is the gospel. It's a price Jesus paid with His life to forgive our sins, allowing us to stand before God in His righteousness. Therefore, we take care of our bodies, avoiding extremes, out of love, respect, and honor to our Creator. Faith in what Jesus has done for us becomes our motivation.

Because of faith we can honor God and strive for a balance between rest and work. Without faith we come to the conclusion we must work for everything we need. Therefore, we think we must work long hours seven days a week. The result: we become tired and hard to get along with. When this happens, we dishonor God by the way we treat others.

Faith in the promises of God changes the way we live. He takes care of our needs and instructs us to get the rest we need. He tells us we should take a break from our work one day in six and only work a reasonable amount of time each day. In Psalm 127:2 God says,

In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat — for while they sleep he provides for those he loves.

Does that mean we should sleep our life away, do no work and wait for God to



provide for us? God says the exact opposite in Proverbs 20:13:

Do not love sleep or you will grow poor; stay awake and you will have food to spare.

God calls us to avoid extremes when it comes to work and rest. Following His prescription we go about our work rested, fresh and agreeable, glorifying God with our bodies and treating those around us in a godly way.

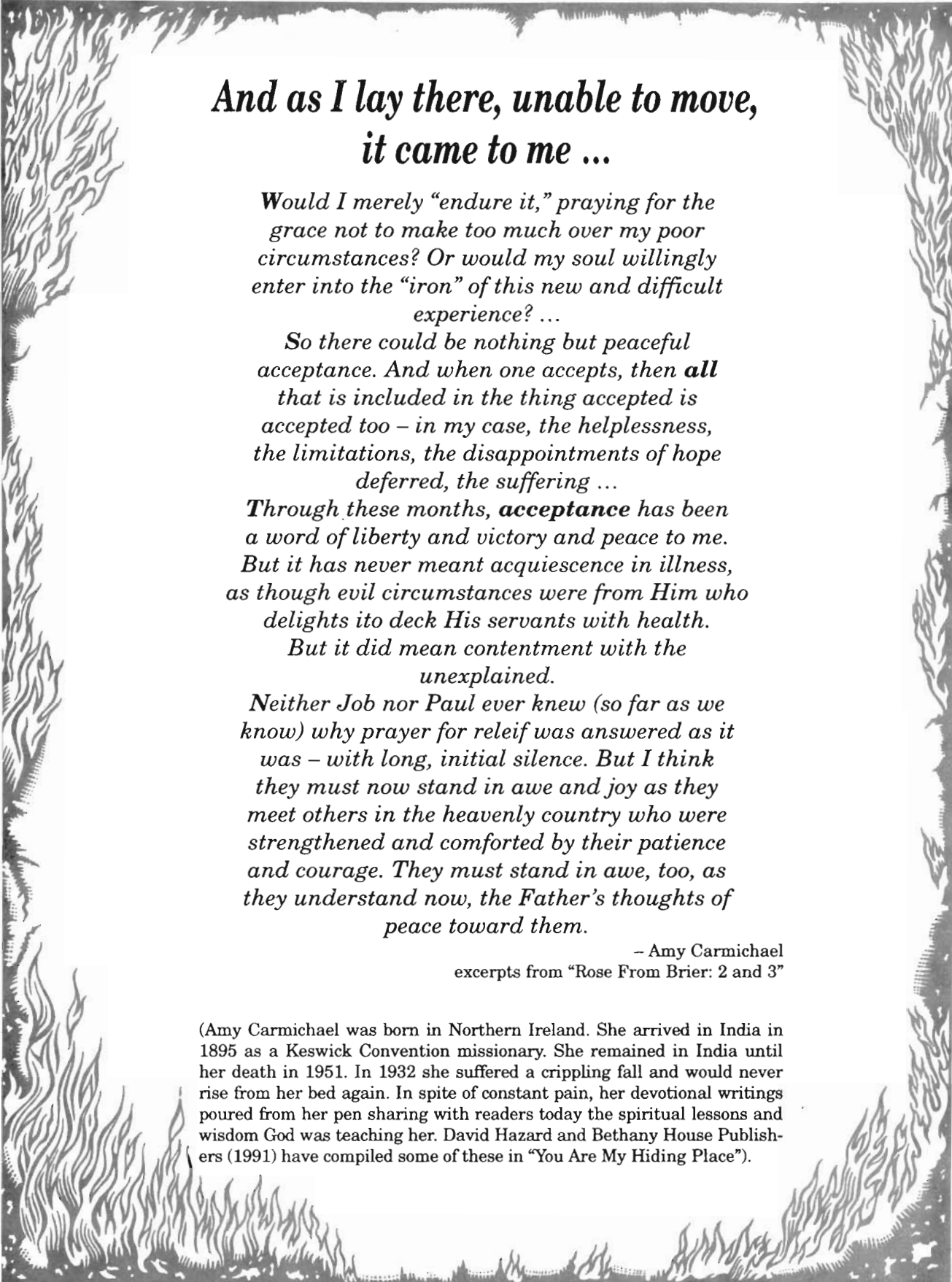
Faith motivates us to practice moderation in the way we eat. The amount of food we eat can directly affect our life span. Some people ruin their health by undereating. But because the taste of food is so enjoyable, most of us go to the other extreme. God has warned us against gluttony. He does this for our own good. He wants us to live healthy, enjoyable lives, rather than having pain and sickness. By watching what we eat we can add years to our lives and life to our years. Those years can be used to serve God with our bodies bringing His love, kindness, and the good news of salvation to those around us.

In light of God's grace, will you commit yourself to care for your body by avoiding extremes? That will show respect and honor to God.

Now that I've finished writing this article, I think I'll reward myself with some chocolate chip cookies. I think one or two should be enough.



— Pastor Del Palmer
Faith Lutheran
Shakopee, Minnesota



And as I lay there, unable to move, it came to me ...

Would I merely "endure it," praying for the grace not to make too much over my poor circumstances? Or would my soul willingly enter into the "iron" of this new and difficult experience? ...

*So there could be nothing but peaceful acceptance. And when one accepts, then **all** that is included in the thing accepted is accepted too – in my case, the helplessness, the limitations, the disappointments of hope deferred, the suffering ...*

*Through these months, **acceptance** has been a word of liberty and victory and peace to me. But it has never meant acquiescence in illness, as though evil circumstances were from Him who delights to deck His servants with health.*

But it did mean contentment with the unexplained.

Neither Job nor Paul ever knew (so far as we know) why prayer for relief was answered as it was – with long, initial silence. But I think they must now stand in awe and joy as they meet others in the heavenly country who were strengthened and comforted by their patience and courage. They must stand in awe, too, as they understand now, the Father's thoughts of peace toward them.

*– Amy Carmichael
excerpts from "Rose From Brier: 2 and 3"*

(Amy Carmichael was born in Northern Ireland. She arrived in India in 1895 as a Keswick Convention missionary. She remained in India until her death in 1951. In 1932 she suffered a crippling fall and would never rise from her bed again. In spite of constant pain, her devotional writings poured from her pen sharing with readers today the spiritual lessons and wisdom God was teaching her. David Hazard and Bethany House Publishers (1991) have compiled some of these in "You Are My Hiding Place").

When health vanishes

—Arlene Uejima
Morgan Ave.
Lutheran
Minneapolis,
Minnesota

My story is that of the classic childhood weakling without the “Hollywood-style” happy ending. Actually I am as medical science said I would be.

My personal doctors have been in reputation and in actual knowledge, walking textbooks. They have also been some of the most concerned, caring and compassionate human beings one could hope to meet. Because they cared, they tried to prepare me for the probability they saw coming. How grateful I am that they did so. They understood the service-minded spirit in the individual body of Arlene Uejima and worked with me physically to the fullest in case God proved them wrong.

My life began during World War II in a Japanese-American Relocation Camp in Arizona — one of ten in the United States. I somehow survived a slightly over three pound weigh-in and a botched delivery which resulted in a physical mess-up called mixture type cerebral palsy.

At 16 months, I left the Arizona desert for Minneapolis and was miraculously alive. Doctors discovered a congenital ventricular hole in my heart. Before the end of toddlerhood, both types of asthma and bronchitis entered the picture. Chronic anemia and myopia and other visual problems challenged me later. Medications, transfusions, surgery and

physical therapy benefited me greatly. I have an outwardly normal appearance to my palsy-deformed body.

For some reason God put a college IQ brain in that body. I desired a college education and a future that was not always realistic. Fortunately the beloved doctors’ curbs tempered my ambitions. Some have retired and passed away. Their successors, most of whom were hand-picked, have carried on the loving care. Even in retirement each chose to stay in personal touch and remain an influence. This emotional support family is God’s most concrete manifestation for me.

College was allowed with cautions. Many people, including my family, said, “Forget it completely.” Looking back, this would have rendered me useless to God as well as to man. Yet to “do college” as some counseled at the big, cheaper university would have been physical suicide. So the ideal was a small campus and private school, but that was expensive.

God opened doors to show approval for this choice in the strangest of ways. A contact of my mother mentioned Augsburg College. The Christian administration of this small Lutheran college and seminary and its exceptional faculty, staff and student body provided transportation and other needs without the added expenses. They never expected pay for all the extras.

I did graduate *cum laude* and attempted a M. A. program at the university where I could study in one building. But then my health went the “predicted medical textbook route.”

The love, support and encouragement of the doctors have been joined by friends whom I never would have without my Augsburg years. Pastor friends have reminded me often that any form of suicide is wrong. Life can only end right if God decides the timing. God’s view of life’s worth must supersede all other human perspectives.

I am still alive to work with volunteer organizations! Through all these years I have seen God work in strange and wonderful ways. He is a better judge in all things!





— Alison Mellgren
AFLBS Dean
of Women
Minneapolis,
Minnesota

In *shape* to serve



Every time I glance at magazines while I'm standing in a check-out lane at the grocery store, I see pictures of size-three models claiming that I can lose eight pounds in a week. I again come to the conclusion: half of what is in my basket should have remained on the shelf. My mom would say the chocolate half.

We live in a world that is increasingly conscious of our physical appearance. Treadmills, ab-rollers, low calorie diets and no calorie diets are the rage. Everyone claims to have a faster, easier way to be trim and toned. We all have that last five pounds we'd like to lose. We struggle through exercise regimens only meant for athletes while trying to exist on diets that only trigger our body's natural defenses. Instead of burning fat, the body stores it thinking it is starving.

This is how the world attempts to be beautiful and healthy. I end up frustrated and cranky. Not exactly Christ-like. The world's standard of the perfect body is of no consequence to Christ.

How are Christians to maintain the body or "temple" we have been given? I Corinthians 6:19-20 says: "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own. For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body."

These verses convey a responsibility to maintain our physical body so the Lord can use us. As I consider my responsibility to take care of my *temple*, I am reminded that in my spiritual life, it is imperative to remain in the Word daily. Without that habit, I become spiritually slow and clumsy. It's the same with my body. My

body needs to be maintained with well-balanced meals and regular physical activity. Somehow I think that chocolate, Doritos and channel surfing fall short of fulfilling those requirements and suggest more of a couch temple mentality.

Everyone knows that at least three, regular, nutritional and balanced meals a day is necessary. I know for me, when life gets crazy, I eat on the run and not when I should. I can't serve Christ with my temple if it's running on little or nothing.

As I think of keeping my temple physically fit, I don't believe I have to be in unbelievable physical shape to serve the Lord. However, I should take advantage of the marvelously created body I have been given. Keeping in shape allows me to enjoy a church clean-up day or 12 excited VBS students without collapsing. There are many ways to exercise and have fun. One of my all-time favorites is rollerblading while listening to Christian music. It gives me the physical challenge needed and time to spend praising my Savior.

I Corinthians 3:16-17 says: "Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are." Clearly and simply, we are reminded that God holds us responsible for the temple He has given us. We should recognize what it is and the need for proper stewardship of our bodies.

I do not have the perfect formula on how to be completely healthy and fit, but I do have a responsibility to my Lord and Savior to endeavor to serve Him. I want to be my best for His service.



Congratulations

Oh the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat. The joy of shouting, "I am done!" And the pain of asking, "Am I done?"

I personally have always struggled with school and wondered why others didn't understand my job was to keep the grade curve



from getting high with my low scores. As others easily succeeded in school, I wondered if that made me just another failure. Success and failure, which is which?

I had a friend in school that graduated with honors. She never saw a *B* on her report card. She was a great success when it came to grades. But one day her toaster quit working and she had no idea how to fix it. For me, fixing toasters was easier than passing tests. I fixed her toaster, she helped me with my test.

It is easy to feel worthless and unimportant when we compare our inabilities to other people's successes. When we do that comparison, we often feel we are insignificant in God's bigger plan for this world, but the opposite is true.

Ruth was an immigrant and a widow but she followed her friend Naomi and became

David's great-grandmother.

David was the youngest in the family. No one took much account of him, but he was chosen to be the king of Israel.

Mary was an unknown, insignificant young girl, but she became the mother of Jesus.

Peter, Andrew, James, and John were just fishermen, but they were chosen to be among the twelve apostles.

I treasure I Corinthians 1:27-29 where it says, *But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things — and the things that are not — to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.*

Do you feel like a failure? Does your life seem insignificant? Watch out! God might have BIG plans for you!



— Pastor Kevin Olson
AFLC Youth Director

There they stand, Lord — four confirmands dressed in their best clothes, with freshly scrubbed faces.

There they stand, Lord — declaring their belief in You, your Son and the Holy Spirit.

There they stand, Lord — promising to continue steadfast in the covenant of their baptism, to remain faithful to the teaching of the Christian church, to be diligent in the use of the means of grace.

There they stand, Lord — surrounded by deacons and pastors to bless and pray over them.

Parents sit remembering each moment of their child's life. Watching with a catch in their throats and a tear in their eyes.

This is a big step Lord — all

the prayers of the past years, each Bible story read, verse quoted, love expressed to this young person in countless ways.

Today each confirmand publicly chooses whether to follow in the steps of their parents who love and obey You, or to turn their backs on You.

There they stand, Lord — making earnest promises. Each sincere face a gift from You, with dreams, hopes, and a future that You have planned for them.

There they stand, Lord — at a spiritual graduation. I remember when I stood before an altar rail, making the same earnest

promises. You know, and I remember my failures.

There they stand, Lord — will they still be standing for You tomorrow, next week, next year, and the next and the next?

Each of us chooses daily whether to continue to obey You or not. We must each day confess our sin, again renounce the devil, and restate our faith in You.

There they stand Lord — There we stood — Here I stand.



— Lois Grothe
Bethany Lutheran
Astoria, Oregon

Confirmation Day

Over the past few weeks, people have been asking about the spiritual fruit we are seeing here at AFLBS. We have been excited with the revival and growth taking place among our students and the people they are reaching. God is answering prayer!

Here are a few experiences for which to praise God:

◆ During our first weekend retreat in September, our student body viewed two evangelistic movies. As you might guess, students who come to Bible school are not always saved. After those movies – *Moment of Truth* and *Future Tense* – we had an altar call. Six students prayed to receive Jesus that night. Many others made commitments.

◆ After Christmas break, our first chapel service was built around the topic of assurance. Focusing on I John 5:12-13 and on John 5:24, I explained how students could know for certain about their salvation. Praise God! That morning, four students came to assurance of salvation.

◆ In Personal Evangelism, a class offered spring quarter, students hoping to earn an A or a B were required to write an evangelistic letter, share their personal testimony with a non-Christian, or to explain the way of salvation with a non-believer (or all three!). What a bold band of students we saw!

One student, Marty Moser, asked his boss at the car wash if he could share his testimony as a part of his course work. The boss invited him in. After Marty shared it, the boss asked him questions for 20 minutes, even asking people who came in his office to leave — until Marty was

done answering. Marty shared with him the way of salvation. His heart is growing soft.

Another student, Angie Olson of McIntosh, Minnesota, shared her salvation testimony with the woman for whom she nannies in Plymouth. The woman, a kind, upper class woman, was a church attender, but apparently had never heard that people need to receive Jesus personally. Angie was bold, and the woman listened to her testimony with sincerity and has continued to show an openness to Angie's witness.

One student, Nathan Hembre, a native of Houston and former navy seaman, felt bold enough to ask permission of a cell phone salesperson to share a gospel presentation at the Ridgedale Mall. The man listened patiently and filled out a warm-hearted critique on Nathan's presentation.

Another student, Melanie Blawatt, asked her supervisor at the jewelry manufacturer for whom she works if she could share her salvation testimony. The woman not only permitted her, but offered a gracious evaluation and encouragement. She said she had never heard anyone explain their conversion experience before.

◆ About 15 of our students work at a local car wash. Since the beginning of the year, these students have been praying for many of their unsaved co-workers. Two days before choir tour, one of our male students was able to spend about an hour talking to a high school employee named Joe. The men's dorm rejoiced when the student appeared from the third-floor phone room afterward: "Joe accepted Christ!" Our Bible school students who work with him said, "We never thought Joe would become a Christian!"

Answers to prayer

◆ During choir tour, my wife Linda and I had the privilege of joining choir director Jerry Nelson and our 33-member choir on a tour through Nebraska, Colorado, California, Arizona, Oklahoma and South Dakota. At Jerry's request, I preached a basic salvation message at the end of each concert. We marveled to see what happened as we gave an invitation to accept Jesus each evening. During the last six concerts, 14 people indicated to us that they prayed to receive Jesus as Savior!

◆ Even outside of school and school-related activities, we're seeing the Holy Spirit working. Recently our New Testament professor, Jerry Moan, came into my office with a smile on his face. His wife Rebecca has been offering piano lessons to a neighborhood girl, a high school senior. One day during piano lessons, Rebecca led that 17-year-old in a prayer to receive Christ.

◆ Last month, after a tragic death involving a college student from my former parish in Foston, Minnesota, the Lord opened the door for me to preach the funeral sermon before a congregation of about 300 mourners. The young man was a great friend, and I was intensely sad. So I preached on Matthew 11:28, where Jesus says, "Come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." It was a simple gospel sermon, and after the message, the Lord gave a freedom to offer the invitation to pray a prayer to receive Jesus as Savior. Even in the sorrow, we praise God that eight to ten

people indicated they received Jesus that afternoon.

◆ During April 18-20, we held our annual Campus Days event at AFLBS. We were pleased when 125 registered, more pleased (and a little frazzled!) when 210 showed up. Our campus was loaded with more than 310 young people stuffed into dorms that are designed to fit 120 comfortably. During the Friday night service, Pastor Tim Carlson of Wheatland, Iowa, preached a message on Psalm 25, "Do not let me be ashamed." We had an altar call for high schoolers who wanted to repent of being ashamed to publicly identify with Jesus Christ. Not only did six students pray to receive Jesus that night, but the altar area was filled to overflowing, teenagers kneeling to pray in repentance. Even the center aisle was filled three-quarters of the way back.

Thanks for praying for us. We thought you might want to know the results of building and supporting a Bible school that is 30 years old this spring. AFLC people who founded this institution, and those who help keep it running today should know the fruits of their labor. Praise God!

— Pastor James L. Johnson
Dean, AFLBS
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Seminary graduation

On May 17, 1997 Tom Schierkolk received his Graduate of Theology degree from the Association Free Lutheran Seminary in Minneapolis. Pastors David Nelson and James Ritter were awarded their Master of Divinity degrees and Pastor David Johnson was recognized as completing the AFLC colloquy program.

Three new seminarians have already been accepted to begin their course work next fall. At this time, Dr. Francis Monseth said he expects five new students in AFLTS next fall.

Books given

• The Board of Parish Education recently gave all AFLBS students a book called *The Way of Life*, by A. W. Knock, to encourage personal Bible study and spiritual growth. *The Way of Life* covers many essentials of the Christian life including God's will, forgiveness, assurance of salvation, the conflict of the two natures, victory over sin, sanctification and witnessing. Each chapter closes with study questions to encourage application. The Board also gave a study on I Corinthians by O. Gornitzka to all AFLTS students. Both had been donated to our department by Lutheran Colportage. Several copies of the I Corinthians study are still available free for the asking. *The Way of Life* has been reprinted and is available through Parish Education for \$2.95 each.

Thank you

• Several people have volunteered in our department the past few months helping to prepare and set up shelving in our new display area, ~~recounting and boxing~~ up reprintings of our second and fourth grade books, restocking shelves, and miscellaneous other duties. Thank you for your generous help!

We also have many volunteers working on our Kindergarten, First Grade, and Third Grade curriculum. Pray for them as they give their time and talents to the glory of God.

PARISH EDUCATION

You can help

• The Parish Education Department is compiling a collection of true mission stories from our own AFLC people who have served or are serving in foreign countries — including short-term workers. We hope to make these available to our AFLC churches to use with their Sunday school classes and opening chapel time. It is not necessary that your mission work be through AFLC missions specifically.

If you have a story to share about God's work on the mission field, please send it to AFLC Parish Education, 3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard, Minneapolis, MN 55441. These can be either typewritten or dictated onto a cassette tape. We look forward to hearing from you!

• Did Sunday school change your life? What do you remember about Sunday school? How did God's Word transform your life through a class or a specific teacher? We are looking for your answers in 50-100 words to print in the August *Lutheran Ambassador*. Please send your testimony to the AFLC Parish Education Department.

• The Parish Education Department is in need of an additional personal computer (486 or higher) with color monitor and hard drive. If you can help us, please contact Marian or Karen in Parish Education at (612) 545-5631.

• Parish Education has a resource list of all their teaching aids available. If you have not seen their updated list recently, please ask for your copy. Check out the Parish Education display at the annual conference and pick up our materials.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

A Christian Education Luncheon will be held during the annual conference at the picnic area across the grounds of the college. This luncheon is for anyone who is interested in education and education issues. The luncheon will be during the noon recess on Friday, June 13. There is no set cost, a freewill offering will be taken. There will be a short program introducing the Christian Academic Education Board and a time for sharing and a testimony from someone whose life was influenced positively by teachers.

A response card will be in the conference packets which will need to be filled out by Thursday noon and turned in. This will allow us to know how many to plan for. The meal is being provided by the parents and boosters of Our Saviour's Academy in Thief River Falls, and proceeds will go to them. We hope that you will join us. Perhaps we can make this an annual event.

— *The Christian Academic Education Board*

WMF In Memoriams

Myrtle Theodorson, Tioga, ND
Henry Brown, Webster, SD
Mabel Buehler, Webster, SD
Tillie B. Duffney, Detroit Lakes, MN
Anna Thompson, Kandiyohi, MN
Hilma Sutton, Morris, IL
Blanche Olson, McVie, ND
Clara Lee, Webster, SD
Ida Walla, Fergus Falls, MN
Dagney Kjos, Pelican Rapids, MN
Myrtle Hove, Thief River Falls, MN
Clara Gray, Chamberlain, SD
Alice Hanson, Bruce, SD
Lillian Williams, Bruce, SD
Wallace Tangen, Bruce, SD
Glen Aplan, Bruce, SD
George Tivis, Red Owl, SD
Edith Wright, Ray, ND
Edith Arnstad, Tioga, ND
Ove H. Aaker, Valley City, ND
Inga Hendrickson, Valley City, ND
Irene Vandergiest, Valley City, ND
Carol Richenhach, Bethel Park, PA



Elachetladibba, India — Pictured are members of the congregation in this village outside their prayer hall. To finish enclosing the building with brick and stone walls will cost \$300. Pray for this congregation as they complete their building.

Oklahoma congregation join AFLC

The newest AFLC congregation is Good Shepherd Lutheran of Ponca City, Oklahoma. Most recently Good Shepherd was an independent congregation until they voted in April to join the AFLC. They have begun the process of calling a pastor. Good Shepherd is the second AFLC congregation in the state, joining First Lutheran in Oklahoma City. Ponca City is located just 22 miles south of the Kansas border in north central Oklahoma.

Olive V. Jacobson, 86, Wadena, Minnesota, passed away on March 1, 1997. Funeral services were held March 7, at Zion Free Lutheran Church in Wadena where she had been an active member for many years. Her burden for world missions was well known. In the fall of 1966, she taught at AFLBS and served as the school's first houseparent along with her husband Ray. During the early years of the AFLC, she served as the national WMF secretary. She is survived by her husband Ray.

Pastor James Asp, 82, of Morris, Illinois, passed away on April 26, 1997. The funeral service was held on April 30, at Bethlehem Lutheran in Morris. An obituary will be printed in the next *Lutheran Ambassador*.

Minneapolis, Minnesota — Medicine Lake Lutheran Academy is expanding their course offerings to include the ninth

grade beginning in the fall of 1997. In its sixteenth year, the academy is a ministry of Medicine Lake Lutheran Church.

AFLC Partners in Mission outreach annual meeting — Each congregation is entitled to have one representative at the PIMO annual meeting on June 10, 5:30 p.m. at Northland Community College in Thief River Falls, Minnesota, Room D61. For more information contact Pastor Dennis Gray at (218) 782-2249.

VBS will be held during the annual conference sessions in Thief River Falls — An AFLBS team will conduct a VBS for children age five through junior high from 9-3 p.m. There will be a nominal fee for materials. You may register when you arrive for the conference on June 11-15.

Counselors still needed for FLY convention in Estes Park, Colorado, August 4-9. Contact Pastor Dennis Gray at (218) 782-2249.

PEOPLE AND PLACES



Evelyn Carlson and Adeline Haugen, from Monroe Free Lutheran, were given honorary membership pins at the West Coast Spring WMF rally. The "bride" was used to represent the Church — the bride of Christ — during sessions led by Laurie Nash of Minneapolis.



Ishpeming, Michigan — Pictured is one of three quilts made by the Sunday school children of Hope Free Lutheran. Each child designed his own quilt square using special fabric crayons. There were enough squares to make three quilts and a few pillows which were sent to the Miriam Infant Home in Brazil.

Grand Forks, North Dakota — The April flood waters have severely affected two AFLC congregations: Trinity Lutheran in Grand Forks and Christ the King Lutheran in East Grand Forks, Minnesota. Christ the King Lutheran had been serving food 24 hours a day to the sandbaggers when the unexpected happened — evacuation had to take place within a half hour. Early reports indicate all the basement equip-

ment and supplies are damaged, including the kitchen and library. The water was so toxic that everything will need replacing, including the sheet rock. There was no confirmed early report on the condition of Trinity.

According to Pastors Bruce Dalager and Dan Klug, nearly every family in the congregations was evacuated and some homes were severely damaged. Their initial concerns were in being unable to be in contact with their members. Pray for the incredible ministry needs now facing these two congregations, those physical, spiritual and emotional needs of the congregation and of the community around them. Pray for strength and wisdom for Pastor Bruce and Karen Dalager and Pastor Dan and Marna Klug.

"It's not only a call to prayer," said Pastor Klug, "It's a call to action. The needs both financially and physically are going to be so tremendous as we help our own people and those around us." Contact the AFLC headquarters at (612) 545-5631 for more information on how you may help.

Newfolden, Minnesota —

The Westaker and Bethania Lutheran parish hosted Missionaries Connely and Carolyn Dyrud. The parish met together at Westaker for the Sunday school hour and worship followed by a fellowship dinner. Bethania hosted the afternoon program.

Pastor Terry Olson, Dickinson, North Dakota, has resigned as pastor of Our Saviour's Lutheran Church where he has served since 1994, in order to accept the call from Our Saviour's Lutheran in Thief River Falls, Minnesota. He expects to begin his new ministry in July.

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences — January 1 - March 31, 1997

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN MARCH	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$279,330.00	\$12,128.46	49,466.13	18
Seminary	113,300.00	7,061.70	20,721.07	18
Bible School	142,509.00	5,818.85	24,253.13	17
Home Missions.	257,432.00	14,251.15	51,864.01	20
World Missions.	341,000.00	22,764.63	84,462.32	25
Capital Investment . . .	19,000.00	523.49	2,582.58	14
Parish Education . . .	56,517.00	5,417.29	15,908.60	28
Church Extension . . .	14,813.00	493.13	3,535.33	24
TOTALS	\$1,223,901.00	68,458.70	252,793.17	21
TOTALS 1996	1,232,267.00	71,609.44	265,504.25	22
Goal 25%				

NEWS OF INTEREST

Poll: American men are "most pagan" on earth

American men are among the world's "most pagan," according to pollster George Barna. A study reported in The Barna Report, his newsletter, found that the church has little or no influence on many American men.

About one in three American men claims to be a born-again Christian, but only 28 percent attend church on any given weekend. Other forms of religious activity — including Bible reading, Sunday school attendance, and giving time or money to a church — have all declined among American men since 1991.

Barna also found that even men who claim to be Christians often hold unorthodox beliefs that are at odds with biblical Christianity. For instance, 28 percent deny that Jesus was physically raised from the dead, while 27 percent say He committed sins. Surprisingly, 55 percent of self-identified Christian men agreed that all people "experience the same outcome after death, regardless of their beliefs," while only 50 percent of non-Christians agreed. And 39 percent of Christian men believe that "a good person can earn their way into heaven."

Barna found that less than half of Christian men believe that there are absolute moral truths (47 percent) or that the Bible and religion should be primary influences on moral thinking (40 percent).

To reverse this trend, Barna says churches must provide a male-friendly environment, including opportunities to interact with other men, practical Bible teaching, and real-world solutions to personal problems.

Global population growth and Christianity's influence: are we headed for disaster?

Christianity, the world's largest religion, is no longer keeping pace with global population growth — except in Asia and Africa. One possible explanation: religion statistician and researcher David B. Barrett of Virginia Beach points out 97 percent of all church ministries are directed towards Christians, weakening Christianity's influence on the non-Christian world.

The world population is currently estimated at about 5.89 billion. Mission statistics for 1997 (recently published in the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*) indicate 66.1 percent of the world population — 3.89 billion people — are not Christians. That number swells each day by 129,000.

Barrett calculates that roughly one third of the world's present population — 1.95 billion — are Christians. This percentage has remained more or less the same since 1970. In contrast, in 1995 Islam grew from 15.2 to 19.4 percent, a growth mainly attributed to the higher birth rate of Muslims. They are succeeded by the non-religious (15.1 percent), Hindus (12.6), Buddhists (5.6), atheists (3.8), supporters of new religious movements (2.1) and animists (1.72), Sikhs (0.32) and Jews (0.23).

Other statistics supply more pieces to the story. According to 1995 figures published by MARC, a mission research center located in Monrovia, California, the world's population increases each year by 1.75 percent while Christianity grows a mere 1.67 percent. In Europe, population growth for 1995 was 0.41 percent, with a 0.25 percent increase among those professing to be Christian. The population in

North America grew by 1.03 percent compared to a 0.58 percent growth of Christians.

Statistics for Oceania (central and southern Pacific islands including Australia, New Zealand and Malaysia) are similar, where numbers of those calling themselves Christian (0.97) lagged behind a population growth of 1.57 percent. Latin American recorded a population increase of 2.15 percent compared to a growth in the Christian community of 1.95 percent.

A somewhat brighter situation exists in Asia where Christians gained ground. With a growth rate of 4.62 percent, they more than doubled the population growth of 1.92 percent. Christians also increased in Africa.

However, by the year 2000, the number of non-Christians is expected to reach the four billion mark; 25 years later, Barrett estimates there will be 5.2 billion non-Christians. At the same time, the number of Christians will grow by half from the current two billion to about three billion people.

According to Barrett's calculations, proportions of Christians world-wide will shift due to population growth and emphasis on mission work. Europe currently has the most Christians (526.6 million), followed by Latin America (450.5 million), Africa (309.6 million), Asia (299.1 million), North America (202.8 million) and Oceania (19.5 million).

In the year 2025, Europe will be pushed into fourth place with 512.6 million Christians. Africa will take the lead with 669.5 million Christians, followed by Latin America (618.4 million) and Asia (521.5 million). North America will be in fifth place.

Conflicting reports

The people who attempt to predict the weather often do not agree. On numerous days some see clouds and rain in the future, while others say we will enjoy nothing but sunshine. Conflicting reports are given out and the listeners must decide who they are going to believe.

Conflicting reports are given out in other areas of life as well. People like to talk about people. Many times, however, the same thing is not said about the same person. Sadly this is to be expected behavior in the sinful world we live in. Unfortunately it happens far too often within the family of God.

Occasionally one member of the family is described by some as a person with a love for the Lord and people, of high moral character and longing to see souls saved and come to Christ. Others describe the same person in vastly different terms. "You don't know them as I know them," is the claim. While some see sunshine in a person's life, others see clouds.

No life is completely sunny. We all, because of our sinful nature, have cloudy parts. What, however, are we to focus on as we look at and talk about our brothers and sisters in Christ? Is it not those parts that are sunny?

Philippians 4:8 says, "Whatever is noble, ... whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable ... think about such things." The Lord speaks through the Psalmist and says, "You speak continually against your brother ... I will rebuke you" (Psalm 50:20,21, NIV). Let us remember and put into practice Proverbs 11:12: "A man who lacks judgment derides his neighbor, but a man of understanding holds his tongue."

Sadly we are quick to share and believe the cloudy reports we hear about other individuals. Because we are each sinful human beings it is possible our brother has done the worst, but because of what Jesus has done and can do, we anticipate and have a great desire to believe the best.

For our congregations and our church body as a whole, as we consider the future we can see storms and clouds looming on the horizon. If we look, though, we can also see sunshine ready to break through brightly. Disaster is possible, but so is a future more wonderful than we can imagine.

To a people in exile for whom it looked like nothing but storms were up ahead the Lord said, "I know the plans I have for you, ... plans to prosper you and

not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11, NIV). It was stormy in the present, but sunshine loomed ahead.

The Lord invites us to look at the congregation we belong to as one for whom God has good plans. God has brought her into being for a reason. He can do great things through her. Storms will come, but in the midst of it the Son will shine even brighter. As long as it is a congregation that belongs to and trusts in the great God, it is a congregation with a great potential.

The nature of God is another area in which conflicting reports are heard. Some describe Him as a cruel taskmaster. Others see Him as distant and impossible of being known. Still others report that He is weak and irrelevant to our daily lives.

We believe the reports given to us by God Himself in His Word. He is "compassionate and gracious ... slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness" (Exodus 34:6, NIV). He is "merciful and forgiving" (Daniel 9:9, NIV). "He is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (Colossians 1:17, NIV). He is "able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine" (Ephesians 3:20, NIV).

What reports are you believing about your own future? Some may be telling you it looks awfully cloudy and getting darker. They may say your potential for overcoming challenges, growing in Jesus and making a difference for the Lord is dim at best. Don't listen to those reports. Listen to the one that comes from God.

When you have confessed what you have done and are trusting in what Jesus has done in dying for your sins and rising again, you are more than a conqueror through Him who loved you (Romans 8:37). You are a new creation (II Corinthians 5:17). Your sins have been forgiven and you have received the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). You are called a friend of Jesus, chosen by Him and able to bear much fruit (John 15:15,16). You can do everything through him who gives you strength (Philippians 4:13).

For the one trusting in Jesus the weather report to believe is that which comes from God. It says storms will come, but they can be survived. Clouds will lurk around, but the blessings of God will still rain down. Because of the Son who shines, sunshine will prevail.

— Pastor Craig Johnson

**"... the listeners
must decide
who they
are going to
believe"**

The annual conference: *The great spiritual powerhouse*

Attending an AFLC annual conference for the first time is one of the most confusing, yet spiritually uplifting experiences one can have. I remember the frustration I felt when I first attended an annual conference from beginning to end. Having been to several education and political conventions, I thought I knew how conventions were supposed to work — delegates representing districts pass resolutions that ultimately control the organization. You can imagine my shock when I found out that anyone can attend and vote, and few if any of the resolutions are binding. What is even more astounding is that this is the way Sverdrup and Oftedal intended it to work.

First of all, we are not a synod. Though Sverdrup originally thought a representative system with binding conference resolutions could work in a free church as it had in a synod, he became rapidly disillusioned by the abuses of this approach in the 1890s. Binding resolutions and a free church, he concluded, are incompatible: if you bind the congregations, you are in danger of binding the work of the Holy Spirit.

As James Hamre says in his biography *Georg Sverdrup*, "... the LFC was giving up the 'often-misused representative system.' It

was not to be a new synod; it was conceived as a fellowship or association of congregations bound together by a spiritual rather than external bond" (134). With a representative system, then, some congregations may not be represented at all — how sad — while others may have fifty members or more — how wonderful!

Furthermore, "The annual convention of our church is not a legislative body," says C. J. Carlsen in *The Years of Our Church*, but, "It is ... taken for granted that the congregations will accept the decisions that are thus made and referred to them, though it is not legally or otherwise incumbent upon them to do so" (104-105).

So if the conference is not a legislative body, how is the work of the Association accomplished?

In order to prevent the annual conference from infringing on the freedom of the congregations, the work of the church is accomplished by autonomous corporations: schools, missions, and the Organization Committee — now called the Coordinating Committee. In recent years, corporations and committees have been added.

What, then, are the functions of the annual conference? Hearing reports from officers and corporations, electing officers and members to various corporations and boards, passing resolutions

as recommendations, and the most important function of all — spiritual fellowship and renewal.

The spiritual fellowship and renewal has always been the emphasis. Eugene Fevold in his book *The Lutheran Free Church*, says, "He (Oftedal) characterized the annual meeting as 'the great spiritual powerhouse,' ... the annually renewed source of spiritual strength, from which, under the Holy Spirit's guidance, congregations and individual Christians were inspired to the self-sacrifice and unity of purpose necessary for the accomplishment of the ... tasks" (107-8). From the beginning Oftedal saw the conference as a great spiritual "drive wheel," not a debating forum.

This renewal can still be experienced once we get away from the notion that the conference is a legislative body. It is not *that*, it never was set up to be *that*, and if it ever becomes *that*, we will cease to be an association. Rather, the conference is more of a Bible camp for grown ups. The same joy and fellowship we had in our youth, renewing friendships from year to year and growing in the Lord, can still be experienced at the AFLC annual conference.

(To be continued)

— Loiell Dyrud

*Our Saviour's Lutheran
Thief River Falls, Minnesota*